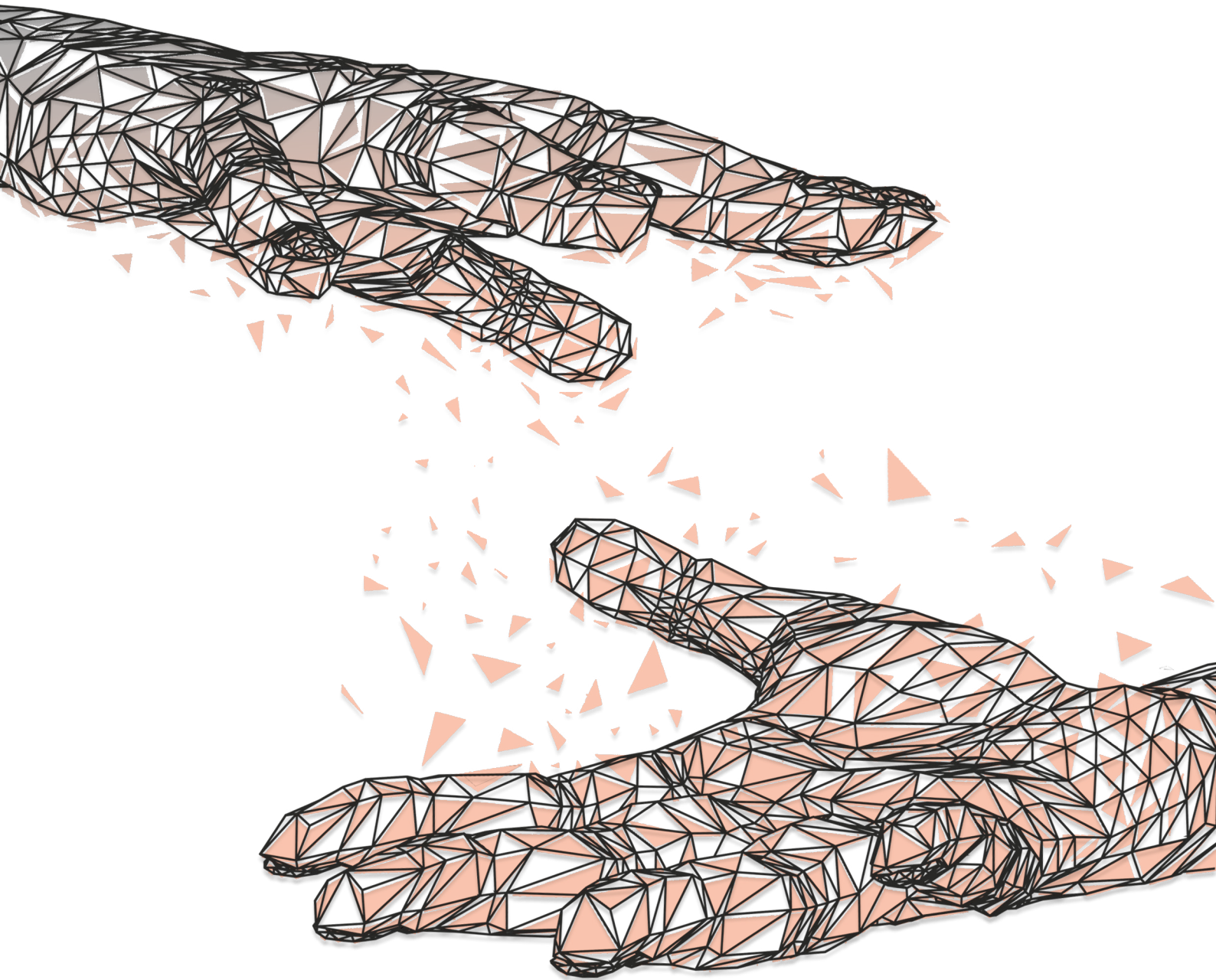


COUNSELLING PRACTITIONER BEGINNER TO ADVANCED



ICEBERG CONCEPT OF CULTURE:
SELF REFLECTION **EXERCISE**

ICEBERG CONCEPT OF CULTURE: SELF REFLECTION EXERCISE

Throughout history, human beings have moved from one geographical location and into another in search of liberation, freedom and resources. Too often, those radical movements have caused conflict between neighbours. As with all disputes, there are typically always winners and losers.

In the 21st Century global economy, we have become more connected than ever before and commonly need to interact with different people from all parts of the world. Via the ever-evolving sciences and technologies, we can move great distances in just a few hours and instantly connect with people who live in the most remote regions. But it indeed hasn't always been this way!

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

Consider how globalisation has changed the way that products make their way into our possession. Product design may begin in China with manufacturing in Holand. Ideas may flow from Bulgaria to a designer who lives in India. That design could then be produced in Indonesia or other parts of Malaysia. For the global economy to function, we must all learn how to bridge the differences in our differing cultural language, beliefs, customs, behaviours and expectations.

In many past surveys, business leaders from the UK and the USA state they need employees with specific 'soft skills'. These skills include (but aren't limited to) having a good work ethic, a willingness to learn, interpersonal skills and a 'can do' attitude.

Soft skills are the personal attributes we need to succeed in the workplace. These are often related to how well we work with others – in other words; soft skills are people skills. Soft skills are different from hard skills (such as a trade or craft), which are directly relevant to the task at hand.

Successful negotiations in any conversational context often rely on sensitivity to and a sound awareness of the cultural differences that make each of us unique. To begin, we must become aware of ourselves and identify our cultural assumptions and preferences. Once we have become this aware, we might then begin to appreciate better the reasons for (and different) patterns of behaviour in cultures that differ from our own.

The objective is that we will improve communication. By enhancing the connections we have (and therefore the overall quality of relationships) through more effective communication, our day-to-day interaction are likely to be far more successful for all involved.

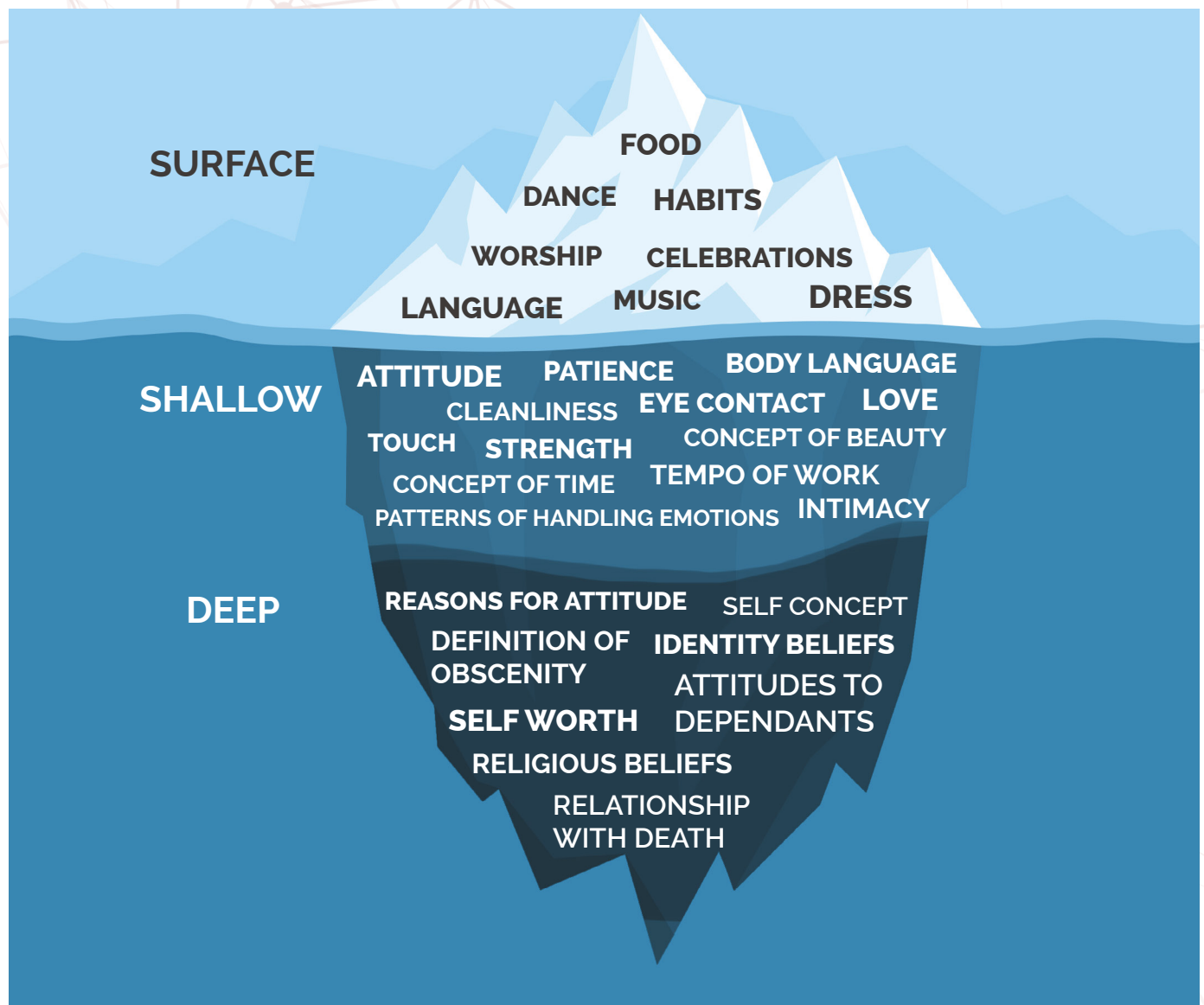
There are many definitions of the word 'culture.' Many people are content to view "culture" as an entire way of life for people, which includes (but isn't limited to) language, dress, food, music, religion, family structures, attitudes, values, and beliefs. Others, however, see 'culture' as being physical products (or artefacts) such as paintings, built structures, music or artwork etc. To them, we might find culture at a concert, museum, or maybe while on a tour of a historic village, city, or nature trail.



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Toward the end of the 19th century, the term 'culture' was used to differentiate between 'good people' and 'bad people' throughout society, or, between the 'cultivated' and the 'uncultivated'. To be "cultured" was to be 'civilised', whereas, to be 'uncultured' was to be 'uncivilised'.

In 1976, Edward T. Hall developed the Iceberg Model of Culture. If you've ever watched the 1997 movie 'Titanic' (starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet), then you should appreciate how the majority mass of an iceberg lies beneath an ocean surface with just only the tip visible to the human eye.



Edward T. Hall's concept of culture was very similar in the sense that he felt the visible aspects of culture were only the 'tip of the iceberg', but much of what drives our culture lies unseen, below the surface and very VERY unconscious! There are some elements of culture we can see, such as the food people eat, the clothes they wear and ritualistic behaviour. Then, there are other elements of culture which aren't quite so obvious such as religious beliefs, expectations and social preferences - these are represented by the more significant part of the iceberg



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which remains underwater (and cannot always be seen by the human eye).

Culture is a complex concept which influences virtually every aspect of our lives – both consciously and unconsciously. On the visible level, our culture impacts the way that we greet each other, the social traditions we celebrate and even the food we eat. The more impacting aspects of culture which are often less apparent include our identity beliefs, our worldviews and values which directly or indirectly influence the visible parts of culture (the tip of the iceberg).

In short, if we want to understand people, we must also recognise and embrace the vast range of interpersonal differences that derive from the cultures we develop in as individuals.

First though, if we are to better appreciate difference and the various aspects of culture that makes each of us unique, we must first explore and acknowledge how culture has influenced and governed our own preferences and behaviours.

Take as long as you need to reflect on the following questions before answering them honestly. This exercise 'should' help you to recognise how culture has already made its impact on you!

1a. What language do you speak at home?

1b. Where did you learn this language?

2a. Do you know a second language? What is it?

2b. Why did you learn this language?

3a. Do you subscribe to a religion or a specific belief system? (I.e. Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Animist, Muslim, etc.)

3b. Who influenced your decision in choosing this belief system?



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4a. What foods do you typically eat?

4b. How did you become so accustomed to these foods?

5a. What societal holidays or celebrations are important to you?

5b. Who introduced you to these holidays or celebrations?

6a. How necessary is having an extended family to you?

6b. How do your preferences differ from other cultures?

7a. What genre/style of music do you naturally prefer?

7b. How did you become so accustomed to this music?

8a. What style of music do your other family members prefer?



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8b. Who or what might have influenced their preferences?

9a. What books do you read for study or pleasure?

9b. Why do you have this taste in books?

10a. Do you play any sports? If so, list them:

10b. How has your culture impacted this?

11a. Describe your preference of clothing style:

11b. How has your culture impacted this?

12a. How do you greet someone you know?



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12b. Who taught you to greet people you know this way?

13a. How would you greet a stranger?

13b. Who taught you to greet strangers this way?

14a. What amount of 'personal space' is comfortable for you?

14b. How OK is it for others to have different preferences in this?

15a. How important is time? How OK is it to be late or early?

15b. Who or what influenced your relationship with time?

16a. Define your work ethic and approach to getting things done?



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16b. Who might have influenced you in this area?

17a. List the 'rules' you associate with politeness:

17b. How do you know these rules are 'right'?

18a. If you had to name your culture, what would it be?

18b. How many other people are accustomed to your culture?

